

# Glastonbury-Wimbledon 1972

It was 1972. A pub near Glastonbury Tor, Somerset, England. Evening time.

The pub was filled with "hippy types" or, in the parlance of those days, "a bunch of freaks". Men with beards and long hair. Women with long hair and ankle length dresses. Several people wearing cloaks and a couple of them had brought walking staves made from twisted tree branches.

They sat at the tables talking and laughing about magic or flying saucers, time travel or "that time they were too stoned to find the house where they were squatting". They smoked roll-ups and drank strong Somerset cider.

This pub was The Rifleman's Arms, one of the few pubs in the Glastonbury area which would allow "hippies" onto the premises. All through the town a visitor could see pubs, cafés and restaurants which displayed "no hippies" signs in their windows or on their doors. Like prejudiced towns of olden times, when the signs would've read "no dogs, blacks or Irish", but these 1972 exclusions were directed at long-haired, bedraggled travellers of the "New Age". A few places were different though. The Rifleman's Arms, a couple of other pubs such as The Lamb Inn and some of the local shops were cool and would let the eccentric travellers in. There was even a vegetarian macrobiotic café where the New Agers gathered during the daytime. Glastonbury had become a magnet for anyone who was interested in the magical and mystical. The church tower on top of the pointy hill, the abbey ruins, the local place names containing historical and mythological references to Avalon and the Grail combined to produce a feeling of "this is it" and "this is where it's really happening".

Glastonbury was widely recognised to be the ancient Avalon of Arthurian romance. Not Camelot. It was important to remember that Avalon and Camelot were not the same place. Glastonbury was Avalon, in Latin: Insula Avallonis, In Welsh: Ynys Afallon, "The Isle of Apples". The surrounding wetlands of the Somerset Levels had once been completely submerged and the Tor rising above as an actual island.

Many houses in the area had been bought by psychics and mediums, authors, musicians and members of non-conformist religions. In the Rifleman's that night was a young lad with unshaved bum fluff on his chin and a Canadian Air Force surplus jacket on his back, blue jeans on his legs and baseball boots on his feet, looking around himself at the other customers and feeling isolated from them. He didn't quite "get" how they could all be so relaxed and free & easy with each other. Pete was a teenager who had always felt tense and self-conscious in the presence of others, relaxing only when alone with a good book or a comic.

A friendly face at the table was a stocky guy who was choosing to go by the name of "Gimli". There were many around Glastonbury who had adopted names from fantasy novels. There was a Legolas, a Baggins, a Treebeard, a Redbeard, an Aragorn, a Gnomie, a Tinkerbelle and several Gandalfs. There was also a Jesus and several others who clearly thought they were Jesus but hadn't chosen to use that name.

Gimli was getting up to buy another pint of cider. "I'll get you a drink" he said to Pete, "What're you 'aving?" Pete reacted nervously. "Oh. No thanks. I don't drink alcohol." "Don't drink?" Gimli was aghast. "Everybody drinks." "I don't" replied Pete, with a shrug and an apologetic grin.

"What. Given it up?"

"No. No. Not that." Pete shook his head, "I never started in the first place. I don't smoke either." "Are you sure you're in the right place?" chuckled Gimli, "How can you sit in a pub and not drink something?"

Pete thought for a moment. "I'll see if I can get something non-alcoholic" he said, getting up and walking with Gimli to the bar. At the bar he asked for and, after a moment of raised eyebrows received, a pint of milk in a pint glass. A minute or so later he was back at the table sipping at the milk while others stared, laughed and joked about "The Milky Bar Kid". As the next few weeks went by Pete got to know a lot of the travellers and "freaks". He found that he had to keep explaining why he didn't drink or smoke or take drugs. It wasn't easy, surrounded by hedonists, to explain that he preferred his brain to work as nature had intended. Of course they would argue that perhaps nature had intended the brain to function filled with alcohol and strange substances. Pete was skeptical and felt that he would never be quite the same as the others there.

He made a friend, Jim Baggins, another teenage introvert, and the two decided to collaborate on a fantasy and science fiction novel about a new messiah coming to Earth in a spaceship.

The book was set 20 years in the future, in 1992. Pete had begun writing bits about a wizard. He was a bit obsessed with the idea of magic and the romantic image of wizards. He claimed "I shall study wizardry for the next 40 or 50 years and then, when I am old, I shall be a great wizard!!!" Baggins decided that Pete's nickname should be "Wiz".

They met each day and wrote pages, chapter outlines, character lists and backstories. Their inspiration was the Tor and Chalice Hill, the Chalice Well Spring and all the people they met everyday who had come to experience Glastonbury as a place of magic and legend.

Then Pete met a woman and fell in love.

Wendy was 29, 10 years older than Pete. She was dark haired, pretty, flirty and Pete's first romantic infatuation. They went everywhere together around Glastonbury. Taking long walks kissing and cuddling to the Chalice Well and up to the top of Glastonbury Tor, talking about the magic and ancient legends. Flattered by the attention she was getting from this 19 year old, Wendy began to manipulate his feelings.

Wendy sometimes lived in John Mandolin's flat in Bristol. John was a 30-something computer programmer and mandolin player who visited Glastonbury occasionally. Wendy had an occasional relationship with John but gave John's address to Pete to come and visit her there. When he did, she returned his intense gaze with a smile and said "Ooh, he's here again," as she turned to ask John to make some tea.

John didn't seem to mind Wendy receiving a male caller at his, John's, flat. He dutifully went into the kitchen to make the tea. Pete was beginning to be aware of the power Wendy seemed to have over men.

At the same time, the sympathy card was in play. Wendy was a hypochondriac. Every little ache or pain she imagined to be life threatening. Pete was gullible and soon Wendy had Pete agreeing to work to look after her and take her to various faith healers and psychics.

He got a job on a construction site in the next town over from Glastonbury got up early each morning to walk the 2 miles to the job. It wasn't easy. He was living in a tent amongst the tents of other "freaks" in a disused, abandoned apple orchard just outside of Glastonbury town. People had moved there when the hostel at the Methodist Church had closed down.

Getting up to go to work after sleeping on the cold hard ground in a tent was tough, especially with no breakfast. Nevertheless he did it for the first 3 days.

The third day, the Wednesday, was different. Pete woke up that morning and slid out of his sleeping bag. He put on his baseball boots. He already had his other clothes on. It was a very cold morning.

Of course no one else was about as Pete crawled out of the tent. It was only just after dawn. Wendy was away visiting a friend in Bristol. The ground was hard with frost. There was no time to build a camp fire and make any breakfast. Food would just have to wait until later. He huddled in his lightweight Canadian Airforce surplus jacket and walked across the campsite toward the footpath.

There was someone there. Laying on the ground. Head on the ground, feet on the barbed wire fence. She had long dark hair which framed her face. Her feet on the barbed wire, her blue jeans snagged on the barbs. Her face was bluish. Blue around the cheeks. The eyes closed.

"Frostbite" thought Pete. "She must be suffering from frostbite. Hence the blue colour. Perhaps she was climbing over the fence and fell. Knocked unconscious. Frostbite. Don't move her. She might have a damaged spine. Phone an ambulance."

There was a Saint John's Ambulance telephone box on nearby Chalice Hill so Pete hurried along the footpath in that direction. The path led down to the road at Wick Hollow and then a properly paved road led up again on the other side.

Reaching the Saint John's Ambulance Brigade box he phoned through and agreed to wait by the box until the ambulance arrived. These old phone boxes were a bit like the famous police telephone boxes seen in Doctor Who and were of approximately the same vintage.

He waited for a long while, beginning to worry about the possibility of being late for work, then the ambulance turned up and he led the two ambulance men up the little path from Wick Hollow to the camp site.

When they got there Pete showed the men where the girl was laying. There was also a middle aged woman walking a dog along the same footpath. She watched as the ambulance

men examined the position the girl was laying in. Pete heard the woman gasp and say "Oh, she's not...."

Then Pete hurried off to work feeling good that he had done his good deed for the day.

He arrived at work in plenty of time after all and began his day's labouring duties on the construction site. They were building a new swimming pool for Strode College.

At lunch time the site manager had a quiet word with Pete, telling him that the other men didn't like him because he had long hair and seemed a bit hippyish.

The manager said "Look, I can't sack you just because the other men don't like you but it's going to get a bit difficult. So if you could just decide to leave I'll give you a good reference". Pete thought about it for a while and agreed.

And so it was that Pete was on his way back along the road from Street town to Glastonbury town a few hours earlier than he had expected. Along the way, near Wirral Hill, Pete met Dave, a local alcoholic, who told him that the police were at the campsite. "And they're looking for you" said Dave, studying Pete's face for a reaction.

Pete, puzzled said, "Looking for me? Why?"

"About that girl who hanged herself. They're questioning everybody and they're looking for you."

"What girl who hanged herself ?"

"Up at the campsite"

"I didn't know anyone had hanged themselves. When I left for work this morning there was only an unconscious girl with frostbite".

"Well she's hanged now and the police are looking for you".

"OK. I'd better go and see what they want" Pete concluded and continued walking toward Glastonbury.

Eventually, arriving at the campsite, Pete found that it was indeed true and that were detectives looking for clues all over the site. He introduced and identified himself and, after some brief confusion, was taken to Glastonbury Police Station in Benedict Street to be questioned.

It wasn't a particularly gruelling interview. One of the police officers was very reasonable while the other one made a very weak passing suggestion that there might be foul play involved. Even he knew that it wasn't very likely and quickly gave up that idea.

The campers of Wick Hollow never actually found out the full details of what had happened but this is what Pete was able to piece together from things various different people had said:

A young woman had arrived at the Wick Hollow campsite on the previous evening, had pitched a large and rather posh looking tent, bigger than everybody else's and had not been seen again that evening. At some time during the night she had got up and hanged herself from a tree by some form of cord. The cord had broken and her lifeless body had fallen onto

the barbed wire fence landing in the position in which Pete had found her the next morning. The blue about her face was not "frostbite" but strangulation. The cord around her throat was not visible to Pete because her long hair had fallen across her throat, covering the cord and rendering it not visible. No-one knew her name nor why she wanted to kill herself. A tragic story had ended and no-one even knew what it had been about.

Life continued in Glastonbury. Pete and Baggins continued to write. Pete and Wendy continued their romance. The campers all moved to a new hostel which had been opened in buildings adjoining the police station in Benedict Street and which was being run by church people and volunteers. Suddenly everyone enjoyed new washing facilities and a low price café.

There was a strong feeling of the thinness of reality around Glastonbury and the possibility of fact and fiction crossing over. Life seemed sometimes to be made of dream stuff.

Once, on top of Glastonbury Tor, Wiz met two young men arguing about the ethics of changing the timeline. One claimed to belong to the "Observer" faction and the other to the "Controller" faction. They spoke in a very realistic and matter-of-fact way about their various time travel experiences.

Later that evening Wiz encountered the same two men in the Rifleman's Arms pub. They were continuing their debate. It seemed that they were either genuine time travellers or very well rehearsed Situationists of the Guy Debord type.

There was an awareness beginning amongst some artists that the study of ley lines, Sacred Geometry, Earth Mysteries and Psychogeography could be useful to a phenomenological understanding of "the spectacle" within society. Glastonbury being a nodal point in a conceptual network of dreamlike myth, tethered to the landscape.

Another person working on the study of Sacred Geometry was an American who had a lion's mane of red hair and rejoiced in the name of "Lenny the Dome". Lenny rented a shop from Gino and Nancy Schiraldi, who also owned the vegetarian macrobiotic café which was run by Kris and Aline.

Kris and Aline had a very special fashion sense all their own. Eight years in the future they would've been instantly recognisable as "New Romantics" but those future people of the 1980s were clones and posers. Kris and Aline were the originals from whom they had all been cloned.

Their café served rice and vegetables, veggie burgers and all sorts of dishes which had a clean healthy feeling about them.

They played music in the café a lot. Often Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young or Roxy Music. Pete bought a lot of blank cardboard badges in W. H. Smith and Son and wrote slogans on them. Things like "No Hippies" and "I'm a Beatnik". He put all of these badges in a box on the counter of the macrobiotic café and encouraged people to take a badge for free and wear it. He succeeded in getting a lot of the "hippies" or "freaks" to wear these badges and felt that he had struck a blow against the unfairness of the shopkeepers. It was all a bit silly, he later realised, but it had given him a feeling of purpose at the time.

Pete himself had always been able to get served in any of the shops and cafés anyway. He supposed that he must be rather “straight” looking.

The café was at the back of the Lamb Inn car park. Behind the café was the New Glastonbury Community Information Centre. Behind that was a garden. Behind that was the shop Lenny rented in Benedict Street.

Lenny called the shop “Earthstar Dome Galleries” and adopted the motto: “Head in the Clouds, Feet on the Ground”. He had a design for building geodesic domes. These domes were based on the ideas of Buckminster Fuller and took the form of interlocking six-pointed Stars of David, made out of scaffolding. The Earthstar Dome Galleries had a series of displays up to interest potential customers. There were drawings and also small models of the domes made from toothpicks and rubber bands.

Lenny had a commission from a theatre company called “The Welfare State” which was intending to come to Glastonbury and perform an interactive extravaganza called “The Trials of Lancelot Quail” on Tor Fair Field.

Pete, Baggins and a group of others volunteered to help erect the full size version of the dome and position it in alignment with the ley line on the Fair Field.

When the dome was completed a camera crew from the BBC television programme “Nationwide” came and interviewed Lenny about it. Lenny explained to the camera that he had been given the idea by “a holy man”. At this Pete laughed, thinking that there was no relationship between “holy” things and engineering. Pete instantly regretted the laugh as the scowl which Lenny shot in his direction informed Pete silently that there was nothing funny about sacred engineering.

The Welfare State Theatre Company came. They erected several tents and lit a bonfire. The people of the town were permitted to wander around the Fair Field, witnessing several performances which occurred simultaneously at locations only a short distance from each other. The Tor Fair Field was lit by lanterns but retained areas of spooky darkness and the whole event had the atmosphere and feel of Halloween combined with the circus and the funfair. Lancelot Quail was a Pierrot-like clown hero facing a series of challenges.

The work, so far as Pete could understand it, was intended to demonstrate that theatre must engage with social and geopolitical reality even when working with mythological characters and fantastical scenes. The Welfare State company performed at several locations in addition to Glastonbury, following the path of the Ley Line through Somerset and Devon, straight on to Cornwall and disappearing into a Royal Navy submarine the HMS Andrew off the coast of Land’s End.

Pete and Baggins came away from the Tor Fair Field in a happy daze of surrealism and wonder. The performance had made a deep impression upon both of them.

As their writing activities progressed Baggins and “Wiz” put their own selves, or a caricature of their own selves, into the book as comic relief from the main melodramatic plot. The fictional characters “Wiz and Jim” became a little double act sometimes functioning as the

chorus or jesters in the drama, while the main hero Jehohanan gathered about him the 12 astrological disciples to struggle against the evil antichrist figure who would gain control of the Midgard Serpent "Kundal" sleeping beneath Glastonbury Tor.

When Baggins, who was only 18, returned to his parents' home later in the year he and Wiz continued to write, sending newly drafted chapters to each other by post. Pete had told Baggins about his deep love for Wendy but Baggins was dismissive, referring to the romance as an "infatuation".

Every day was an exploration of the strangeness and the magic hanging in the air over Glastonbury and the surrounding area. The "Shepton Mallet Triangle" as Wiz called it. One of the local travellers was an older man named John Redbeard. He usually slept in the garden shed behind the macrobiotic café. Pete had drawn a pencil sketch of him and the red-bearded one had given his verdict that the drawing was superficially accurate but had failed to capture the soul.

John showed Pete the skin ailment which he had on his shins. The skin was extremely flaked and Pete felt quite distressed looking at it. "Go on, touch it" said John. But Pete wouldn't. A couple of weeks later everyone heard the news that John had died of tuberculosis.

Everyone told tales of magical rituals, drug trips gone wrong and strange turns of luck, both good and bad. Sleeping on Ley Lines was popularly believed to give a person better dreams. Wendy had some friends in Bath and Pete went with her to live with them briefly. Her friends were amused to be hosting "Peter and Wendy" and joked about visiting Neverland.

Though still together the relationship between them was becoming very strained. Pete was religious and didn't believe in sex before marriage. Wendy pretended to agree with his views but became morose and disgruntled about things. She played a trick on Pete, insisting that they go into a Chinese restaurant and order a meal even though, as far as he knew, neither of them had sufficient money to pay. Wendy insisted that she did have money. Then, as they were ordering, she admitted that she didn't have any and said it would be alright because Pete would pay.

Realising that Wendy was playing a trick Pete got up from the table and apologised to the waiter. Wendy followed as Pete walked out of the restaurant and they argued. Wendy seemed to have somehow convinced herself that Pete secretly had some money or was able to somehow get some. Pete began to realise that Wendy wasn't entirely in touch with reality.

They decide to leave Bath and go to Pete's Mum's house. They hitch-hiked from Bath to Surrey, getting stranded for what seemed like centuries in the "Slough of Despond" where the Mars bar factory was, and then eventually arrived at Pete's mum's house in Morden. They stayed a few weeks with Pete's mum.

Wendy was becoming an increasingly troublesome partner. On the pretext that the family dog shouldn't be cooped up in the little suburban house, Wendy opened the front door and encouraged the dog to go running free out in the street.

The dog, which had only ever been down the road on a lead, was confused by the unexpected freedom and ran in front of a car. The result was several cracked ribs and a very sick dog for a few weeks. Wendy thought he should either be put down or "set free". Pete got a job in a South London factory making car batteries and moved with Wendy to a rented flat in Wimbledon. He wasn't happy with Wendy but felt a sense of obligation to her "illness".

After some time Wendy managed to persuade Pete to relent on his "no sex before marriage" policy and they tried making love but it was a miserable calamity of premature release and apologies. Wendy's attitude to the physical side of romance was to lecture Pete about all the bad things husbands did to their wives and all the bad things men had been guilty of down through history and then to lay back and expect Pete to do something.

Wimbledon is a quietish suburb of London, bordering on Surrey. A short walk across the border from Morden. The factory where Pete worked was on the Deer Park Road industrial estate, lands which had previously been the home of Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson. Streets were named after famous people and events from the 19th and 18th Centuries. Peter and Wendy's little bit of Neverland was in Tennyson Road, an ordinary little street with a few trees and the entrance to a nice public park at one end.

Pete became less and less attracted to Wendy and yet still they were living together as a couple. Wendy became an increasingly obvious hypochondriac. Pete worked in the factory and came home in the evening to find that Wendy had been chain smoking all day. The ashtrays filled with filter-tipped stub after stub. Wendy apparently doing nothing else except getting into arguments with the landlady.

Pete came home, began washing the dishes and preparing an evening meal. Wendy stood in the doorway glaring at him and issued her verbal challenge "I suppose you expect ME to do that?"

"No" replied Pete, "I like to cook".

"Cooking's not very MANLY though is it?" She sneered.

"Oh, don't be silly, of course it is. Everywhere you go men work in restaurants. Some of the finest chefs in the world are men. And my dad was a brilliant cook. My dad was a cook in the Canadian army."

"I thought it was the woman's job to cook and clean the house" said Wendy, now not sure if they were having the argument after all.

"No. Not in this day and age. We're in the 1970s not the 1950s. It's equality these days." Declared Pete.

Another time Pete and Wendy were out walking on a rainy evening and Wendy asked him "Can you see them?"

"See what?"

"Them! Look!" said Wendy, pointing at the pavement.

"It's just a wet pavement" said Pete.



"Can't you see them? The worms!" said Wendy.  
"No." replied Pete. "What worms?"  
"There are worms all over the pavement!" insisted Wendy.  
"There aren't any worms" replied Pete, exasperated.

After some argument on the subject Wendy told Pete that she had been "spiked with acid" when she lived in Glastonbury and had been having flashbacks ever since. She had to explain to Pete what a "flashback" was. He had read a few books and magazine articles about LSD and Timothy Leary's belief that it helped a person to connect to God but he didn't have any personal experience of "tripping". He had read about "bad trips" so he knew that sometimes hallucinogens drove people mad. He worried about Wendy's state of mind but had no idea what to do about it.

The situation became progressively worse. Wendy resented being left alone in the flat while Pete was out at work but she was too lazy and hypochondriac to look for work or to clean the place up. Every evening she looked for excuses to start an argument and resented the time he spent writing. "You love that book you're writing more than you love me" she whined "And why don't you ever introduce me to your friends from work?"

"I don't have any friends from work" replied Pete, "Everyone at work is really horrible".

"Well why do you go there then?"

"To earn a living and pay the rent, obviously" said Pete and added "Why are you always trying to start an argument all the time?"

"Well why don't you hit me then?" demanded Wendy.

"I don't want to hit you. Why would I want to hit you? I'm a pacifist. You know perfectly well I'm a pacifist."

The next evening Pete came home to find that Wendy had thrown his manuscript away. Distraught he attempted suicide in a silly and naïve way by taking a small handful of aspirins. When he didn't die he went to work the next day feeling ill and told some of the other men in the workplace what he had done.

They advised him to drink salt water to make himself sick and he spent the rest of the day wandering around South Wimbledon feeling as though he was half in and half out of the world.

It turned out that the book could be saved. He only had to get Baggins's carbon copy sent from Southend-on-Sea. He was careful to keep the carbon copy at his mum's house out of Wendy's clutches. He told Wendy that he was moving back to his mum's house. He explained that the rent on the flat was paid up to the end of the month and after that she was on her own. She could either get a job and pay her own rent or find someone else to sponge off of.

For the next few months Pete lived at his mum's house, worked in various jobs and wrote more chapters for the book project. Between them Baggins and Pete had got tens of thousands of words written. Jehohanan came to Earth at Stonehenge in a saucer ship piloted by elves. The elves had always been extra-terrestrials and they had chosen Jehohanan many centuries before when he was a minstrel at the court of King Arthur. The elves lived in a different kind of time-space which is why Jehohanan had aged little in the intervening centuries.

The 12 astrological disciples travelled around England in Jeremiah Treyne's travelling show. Treyne, one of the 12 himself, was the archetypal moustachioed, top-hatted ringmaster character. The whole story was built of theories of ley-lines, astrology, messianic Kabbalah, Arthurian legends and listening to a lot of Donovan and Pink Floyd etc. and joining it up with court jesters, minstrels and Commedia dell'arte.

Besides their ludicrous attempt at writing the greatest ever totally derivative science fiction stroke high fantasy novel Pete and Jim also drew cartoons and wrote articles about tarot, I-Ching and Kabbalah for the Glastonbury magazine "TORC". In the remaining part of their teenage years they were trying to decipher the universe and figure out every cosmic secret.

If only it were that easy.